



DUNGEONS & DARK SOULS

D&D HOMEBREW

Rules for playing the
world's greatest roleplaying game
in the Dark Souls setting

DUNGEONS & DARK SOULS



UNGEONS & DARK SOULS is a homebrew set of rules to bring the universe of the Dark Souls series to the D&D 5e ruleset. While these rules aim to emulate the difficulty and brutality of the games, the Souls series isn't about *that*. It's about introspection, about slowly losing your will. How long will you persevere before becoming Hollow? The Fire fades, and soon hope will as well.

BEYOND THE 4TH WALL

SIDEbars

Throughout this product you'll find some sidebars with the "Beyond the 4th Wall" title, like this one. These are different from normal sidebars. When we use these we're talking directly to *you*, dear reader. We'll be addressing "*you*" a lot, instead of "*the DM*" or "*the player*".

Expect a much less formal writing pattern in these. We'll use these sidebars to give you our opinion on topics, our reasoning behind some rule, tips about something, or just plainly use the chance to break the 4th wall a little.

CREATED BY DIBASTET

You can find my other homebrew [here](#).

Current Version: 2.0

Coming Next on 3.0: Setting, Theme and Mood, a sample adventure and campaign ideas.

CREDITS

Homebrewery Formatting Guide, by [/u/AeronDrake](#)

"I'm with you" on pg3, by [ArvL](#)

"I love dark souls" on pg4, by [Eli B.](#)

"Dark Souls Issue 1" on pg12, by [PabloFernandezArtwrk](#)

"WAT R U? CASUL?" on pg10, by [TheFearMaster](#)

RECOMMENDED MATERIAL

[Dark Souls Compendium](#)

[Dark Souls 5e](#)

[35 Versatile NPCs Not so Legendary Actions](#)

Our own homebrew. Specifically our [Cantrips](#) and more importantly the [Classless system for 5e](#). Going classless is the next step for those that want to emulate the games a bit more, and don't mind the extra complexity.

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FINAL WORDS

PART 1

PLAYER





THE CURSED UNDEAD

Those who are marked by the Darksign are cursed, afflicted by the dreaded Curse of Undeath. These creatures were once living men and women, but now are undead fated to wander forever, until hope has withered and their spirit has broken, leaving them empty vessels mere Hollows.

CURSED UNDEAD TRAITS

The following rules apply to the cursed undead:

- Its type changes to Undead.
- It's immune to Exhaustion, except from Hollowing.
- It doesn't need to eat, drink, breath or sleep. The cursed undead still needs to perform at most light activity to benefit from a short or long rest.
- While near a Bonfire it benefits from a Long Rest after only 1 hour of resting.
- When it dies it returns to life after 1 hour, as long as its body is mostly intact. It Rises from the dead where it fell with 1 hit point. A cursed undead can't choose to not Rise from the dead.
- Any cursed undead that isn't Hollow may choose to Rise at the location of the last bonfire it rested at. If it does, its body and equipment vanish into ash and reappear near the Bonfire.

When it Rises this way it benefits from a Long Rest, but any Souls it was carrying remain behind, solidified. This choice requires no action and can be made at any time during the 1 hour spent dead, for example in response of the undead's body being at risk or being tampered with.

The creature also receives the following special action:

Darksign. As an action the cursed undead focuses on the Darksign. Its body and equipment vanish into ash and reappear near the last Bonfire it rested, 1 hour later. It benefits from a Long Rest, but any Souls it was carrying remain behind, solidified.

The creature receives the following special qualities:

Undead Fortitude. If damage reduces the cursed undead to 0 hit points, it must make a Constitution saving throw with a DC of 5+the damage taken, unless the damage is radiant or from a critical hit. On a success, the cursed undead drops to 1 hit point instead.

Ashen (optional but recommended). The cursed undead dies outright when brought down to 0 HP.

The Hollowing. Each time it rises the cursed undead must make a Death Saving Throw; if it fails its Hollowing worsens.



HOLLOWING

The curse of undead carries the danger of Hollowing, losing one's self and becoming a wandering mindless, soulless creature. A Hollow. There is no cure for the Hollowing; a cursed undead can either feed souls to the Darksign or see it feeding on its very self. Either way it's only a matter of time.

Each time a cursed undead Rises, it must make a Death Saving Throw; if it fails it suffers one level of Exhaustion and loses more and more of its memories. These Exhaustion levels can't be removed by normal means, except by using Humanity to restore oneself. If a cursed undead reaches the 6th level of Exhaustion it becomes a Hollow.

Note that being resurrected by other means, such as spells, doesn't carry the risk of Hollowing; the cursed undead only needs to make a Death Saving Throw if it Rises as a result of the curse.

HOLLOW UNDEAD TRAITS

Hollows are mindless cursed undead, not different from other, lesser mindless undead. They spend most of their time whimpering or searching for souls. The following rules apply to such cursed undead:

- Can't absorb souls.
- Can't choose to Rise at a Bonfire.
- Understands all languages it spoke in life, but can't speak. For this purpose, it's as if it didn't know any language.
- Immune to the Frightened condition.
- Immune to Exhaustion, even from Hollowing. It recovers any exhaustion levels it had prior to becoming Hollow.

EXHAUSTION

For Dark Souls games the 5th and 6th levels of the Exhaustion condition are a little different:

Level Effect

- 1 Disadvantage on Ability Checks
- 2 Speed halved
- 3 Disadvantage on Attack rolls and saving throws
- 4 Hit point maximum halved
- 5 Speed reduced to 5ft
- 6 Death, or becomes Hollow if its a cursed undead



SOULS

 Cursed Undead are able to see and absorb the essence of life. These wisps of light are called **Souls** and are used to feed the Darksign and stave off the effects of Hollowing. Many freshly cursed undead face with horror the idea that they became soul-devouring monsters, but once the effects of the Hollowing start to show one has to choose to either seek adversity and fight, or to give up and become Hollow.

GAINING SOULS

When a creature dies any non-Hollow cursed undead within 30ft may choose to absorb part of its Souls (no action required). If more than one creature chooses to absorb its Souls they are equally divided among those who choose to absorb them.

A slain creature yields an amount of Souls equal to its listed XP rating, but note that different from XP the creature must be killed and not only defeated to yield any Souls.

Hollow undead can't absorb Souls anymore, but they are still drawn to them like moths to a flame, perhaps on a vain attempt to reverse their sorry state.

USING SOULS

The primary use for Souls is to restore the user's Humanity, temporarily reversing the effects of Hollowing and buying the cursed one a little more time. However as it happens to most precious commodities, cursed undead ended up using Souls as a form of currency among their own kind.

For currency purposes, the basic unit of 1 Soul is equivalent to 1 silver piece.

SHARING SOULS

By concentrating for 1 minute (as if concentrating on a spell), a cursed undead may transfer any number of Souls it currently carries to any other cursed undead its touching. Alternatively, it may "solidify" any amount of souls into a wispy ball of light.

These weightless wisps emanate faint light and sound, but can only be perceived and manipulated by other cursed undead. They may be handled, stored or traded as any item.

As an action a cursed undead may absorb the Souls contained within a wisp that its touching.

LOSING SOULS

When a cursed undead rises after death on a Bonfire or uses its Darksign ability, it loses any Souls its currently carrying, which remain behind on a solidified estate and may be retrieved by any cursed undead.

The cursed undead also loses any Souls its carrying if another cursed undead chooses to absorb its Souls when it dies.

HUMANITY

Humanity is a wisp of dark souls that's capable of restoring a cursed undead's will and sanity for a while, and it's the main reason why they search for and hoard Souls. Humanity wisps are even more precious commodities than normal wisps are, but terrible tales speak of dark warriors that may draw an undead's humanities with a single touch...

USING HUMANITY

As an action a cursed undead may absorb a Humanity wisp, and receives the following benefits:

- It recovers all Exhaustion levels.
- It regains 50 hit points.
- It gains the *Unliving* condition.

ACQUIRING HUMANITY

One can acquire humanity by finding it by chance as a treasure, seeking adversity and refining it from powerful souls... or by taking it by force.

During a short or long rest while near a Bonfire a cursed undead may convert 10000 Souls into one Humanity wisp. This wisp may be carried, stored or traded like any other soul wisp, but it's not lost on death or Rising.

The other way to acquire Humanity is by Invasion and murder; see Invasion under the next section for details on this grisly act.

UNLIVING

The cursed undead has a fac-simile of life, and may fool even himself.

- It receives Advantage on checks made to pass as a living creature. Other creatures have Disadvantage on checks to realize it's not a living creature but an undead.
- It may choose to count as Humanoid or Undead for any purposes. For example an *Unliving* cursed undead might choose to count as Humanoid for the purposes of being affected by *Turn Undead*, or as Undead for *Charm Person*.
- It may summon Phantoms and be randomly Invaded.
 - It doesn't need to make a Death Saving Throw when it Rises from the dead.
 - The condition ends when the undead next Rises from the dead or uses the Darksign to return to a bonfire, whichever comes first.



SUMMONING AND INVASION

In the world of the Undead, Humanity is a powerful force. While infused with Humanity, the cursed undead connects to the first flame that connects all worlds and realities, and opens itself to Summoning and Invasion. The undead perceives others of its kind across multiple worlds, especially when near Bonfires, and many take solace in such company.

On the other hand, its Humanity burns like a candle that may attract predatory Invaders...

SUMMONING

A cursed undead with the *Unliving* condition is able to find and interact with faint glowing signs, tracks of undead from other worlds. By touching one such sign by 1 minute and concentrating on it (as if concentrating on a spell) its is able to summon a Phantom of the undead the symbol represents. Any cursed undead can have a number of summoned Phantoms up to half its Proficiency bonus at any time.

The Phantom appears in an unoccupied space that it can see within 10 feet. Roll initiative for the Phantom, which has its own turns. It is under the Dungeon Master's control and acts according to its nature on each of its turns, but it's friendly towards the summoner and its companions. The DM has the Phantom's statistics.

A summoning ends when the summoner dies or moves further than 300 feet away from the Phantom, when the Phantom drops to 0 hit points, or after 10 minutes. When it returns to its world the Phantom reappears in the space it left or, if that space is occupied, in the nearest unoccupied space.

A cursed undead with the *Unliving* condition, including a player character, may be summoned at any time. See the *Dungeon Master* section for details.

SUMMONED PHANTOM QUALITIES

A summoned Phantom has the following qualities:

- It yields no Soul when it dies.
- It speaks all languages its summoner does.
- It always absorbs souls from creatures within 30 feet, and also from any creature within 30 feet of its summoner.
- When it or its summoner dies, it returns to its own world with 1 HP, but it doesn't lose the *Unliving* condition.
- Any items it picked up are left behind when the summoning ends. Likewise any items it left behind disappear.

INVASION

Humanity glows light a torch across the multiple worlds, allowing a predatory cursed undead to track and hunt it down.

When Invading, the Invader is transported to an *Unliving* victim's world and appears in a random location within 500 feet of it. Contrary to Summoning, Invading is not a natural ability: The cursed undead needs to use an item, ability or spell to be able to invade another's world.

An invasion ends in **Success** if the Invaded dies (by any means) or if it uses the Darksign to return to a Bonfire.

An invasion ends in **Failure** if the Invader drops to 0 hit points or after 10 minutes have passed since it started.

INVADER QUALITIES

An Invader undead benefits from the following qualities:

- It benefits from a *Locate Creature* spell targeting its victim, requiring no Concentration.
- It can't absorb souls during an Invasion, and it yields no Soul if it dies.
- It can't communicate with creatures not from its own world. For this purpose, it's as if it didn't know any language.
- Only other *Unliving* or Phantom cursed undead can perceive it or interact with it in any way.
- If the victim moves or teleports further than 1000 feet away from the Invader, at the start of its next turn the Invader is teleported within 500 feet of its target again.
- If the Invasion ends in **Success**, the Invader gains one Humanity wisp and returns to its world.
- If the Invasion ends in **Failure**, the Invader loses the *Unliving* condition and returns to its world.
- Any items it picked up are left behind when the Invasion ends. Likewise any items it left behind disappear with it.

INVADED QUALITIES

An Invaded undead benefits from the following qualities:

- It receives a warning of the Invasion, as if by the mental version of the *Alarm* spell.
- If the Invasion ends in **Failure**, it gains one Humanity wisp.

OTHER RULES

GENERAL CHANGES

CHARACTER CREATION

Dark Souls stories typically include only humans, but there are other fantasy species and individual DMs might choose to expand the selection to fit into their own game lore. As in most games ask your DM first before committing to a certain race.

STARTING WEALTH AND SOULS

Characters start with their tier's suggest wealth in gold pieces, but no free magic items. However they also start with an amount of Souls equal to their level's required experience, which they may use to purchase items.

MAGIC ITEM PRICES

While the living might not trade in artifacts, the undead certainly thrive on exchanging trinkets for precious Souls. The DM should set a price for every magic item instead of using only its rarity. We personally recommend **Sane Magic Item Prices**, or a similar product for that.

HIT POINTS

To better simulate the high lethality of Dark Souls' attacks, Hit Point are calculated with a different formula:

Hit Points at 1st Level: Constitution score + half your class' Hit Die maximum (3 for d6, 4 for d8, 5 for d10 and 6 for d12).

Hit Points at Higher Levels: Half your class' Hit Die maximum.

BEYOND THE 4TH WALL

LETHALITY AND "ROCKET TAG"

While you don't need to use the suggest HP formula, some sort of HP reduction rule **should** be applied across the board. Cursed undead characters are already harder than normal characters because of the Undead Fortitude special ability, and also death isn't the end for them.

Characters in a Dark Souls game may end up fighting the same tough enemies multiple times, so if you end up using another HP reduction formula just make sure to apply something to NPCs as well, to avoid repeated slogsheets.

In the end of the day we know that the fair lethality of the Souls games can't be ported to D&D (the games' lethality is about skill, D&D's is about luck), but decreasing everyone's HP makes combats faster and, hopefully, more intense.

It also makes the world **really** scary for non-undead creatures, which fits perfectly with the lore. A story chapter with characters as living humans makes for a great prologue for a Dark Souls campaign, if a short and brutal one...

SPELL AND ABILITY CHANGES

CHANGED DAMAGE TYPES

The following damage types are changed to fit with the lore and some mechanics:

- Spells and abilities that mentioned Lightning damage now use Thunder damage.
- Spells and abilities that mentioned Radiant damage now use Lightning damage.
- Cleric and Paladin spells and abilities that mentioned Force damage now use Radiant damage.

MATERIAL COMPONENTS

Every spell now has a non-costly M component. The exception are spells that deal only Acid, Fire or Poison damage, or that cause the Poisoned condition. These spells are called Pyromancies in the setting; they don't have M components but always have a S component (this simulates the free hand holding the Flame).

Also, any cursed undead may use souls in place of a costly M component by paying 10 souls for each 1 gp in the cost.

SPELLCASTING FOCUSES

Spell Component Pouches and Shield Blazon are not available as common items, but only as special ones. All normal spellcasting focuses must be wielded in one hand.

Rangers may use druidic focuses, while Eldritch Knights and Arcane Tricksters may use arcane focuses. Any other option that uses another class' spell list uses that class' focuses to cast its spells.



NEW MAGIC ITEMS

The following items are available for purchase and looting on Dark Souls games. This list doesn't aim to convert all weapons and armors from the games. In fact we believe that most of them can be really well represented by 5e existing items or some homebrew ones.

What this list does present however are the most essential items for a Dark Souls campaign. While these items have values listed in gold pieces, this is mostly for balance reasons, as no price is set in stone and most undead deal only in Souls... or favors.

ANCESTRAL PINE RESIN

Consumable, common

Magical resin taken from the remaining Elder Trees. Most of the surviving trees are scarred with ancient signs of attacks and violence, and their resin is infused with the energy of such attacks.

The resin can coat one melee weapon or up to 10 pieces of ammunition. Applying the resin takes 1 minute. For 1 hour, the coated item is magical and deals +1d6 damage of the resin's type. This extra damage stacks with any other weapon property.

There are resins that deal Acid, Cold, Electricity, Energy, Fire, Necrotic and Poison damage.

Value: 300gp for Energy resin, 200gp for Poison, 250gp others.



COLORED TITANITE

Material, rare

Different types of Titanite are created by special rites, experiments or events, such as bathing a shard on demonic fire or exposing it to the coldest reaches of the world. These rare shards can be used to infuse weapons and shields with elemental energy. Four hours of dedicated work are required to enhance a piece of equipment.

Infused weapons deal +1d6 damage of the shard's type; infused shields grant Resistance to this damage type while worn. There are shards linked to Acid, Cold, Electricity, Fire, Necrotic and Poison damage. An item can only be imbued with only one element at a time, the newest one replacing the previous.

Value: 2000gp.



CRACKED RED EYE ORB

Consumable, common

This fragment of a Red Eye Orb still retains a sliver of its power.

By concentrating for 1 minute on the fragment (as if concentrating on a spell) the user invades an *Unliving* cursed undead world. This works as described under Invasion. The user needs to be *Unliving* to use this item. Can be used only by cursed undead.

Value: 100gp.



DIVINE BLESSING

Consumable, rare

Special holy water blessed by the old goddess of sun and healing.

The user regains 4d4+4 hit points when bathing with this holy water. It also ends blindness, deafness, and any diseases affecting the target.

Value: 500gp.



DUSK HERB

Consumable, rare

When these rare herbs are consumed as an action, the user regains one expended spell slot. Roll 1d4. The result is the level of the expended spell slot recovered. If the user had no expended spell slot of this level he recovers a expended spell slot of a lower level instead.

Value: 600gp.



ESTUS VESSEL

Wondrous item, rarity varies (requires attunement by a cursed undead)

The essence of the primordial First Flame that lights up Bonfires and attracts and comforts the cursed undead can't be contained or removed from a Bonfire, but the faintest sliver of its heat may be trapped by special vessels. This radiant heat and flame is called Estus, and may be used by the cursed undead to bring them comfort and restore part of their essence.

As an action a cursed undead regains hit points when using this vessel. The number of hit points depends on the vessel's strength, as shown below. The vessel may be used a number of times equal to the user's Proficiency bonus before needing to be refueled. A vessel is refueled by holding it close to a Bonfire for 1 minute. Whatever is potency, the vessel glows with orange liquid light when filled.

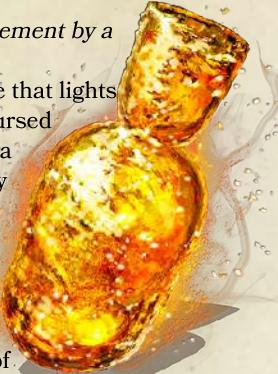
These vessels were traditionally created by Firekeepers in the shape of a flask and given to favored undead, and may be strengthened by them in exchange for favors or Humanity.

Common: Heals 2d4+2. *Value:* 500gp.

Uncommon: Heals 4d4+4. *Value:* 1000gp.

Rare: Heals 8d4+8. *Value:* 5000gp.

Very Rare: Heals 10d4+20. *Value:* 10000gp.



HOLY TALISMAN

Consumable, common

Created by holy undead hunters, this amulet allows them to fight undead with impunity, but it's also used by undead who prey on their own kind.

The user can use an action to throw the amulet up to 60 ft. The amulet shatters on impact and is destroyed. It creates an 20 ft. radius area around the point of impact, that persists for 1 minute.

For the duration any healing that affects only undead does not work in the affected area (this includes Humanity wisps, Estus Vessels and Lifegems). Instantaneous effects don't work, and ongoing effects are suppressed for the duration.

Value: 100gp.



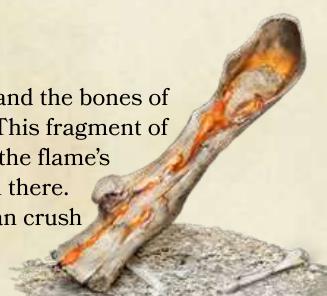
HOMEWARD BONE

Consumable, uncommon

Undead are drawn to Bonfires, and the bones of their deceased sustain the flame. This fragment of bone is imbued with a longing for the flame's security, and may guide an undead there.

As an action a cursed undead can crush the bone. Its body and equipment vanish into ash and reappear near the last Bonfire it rested, 1 hour later. When it returns the user also benefits from a Long Rest. Can be used only by cursed undead.

Value: 750gp.



LIFEGEM

Consumable, rarity varies

Small stones made up of crystallized souls, as if they are all that remains. As a bonus action a cursed undead may crush one of these gems and regain hit points. The number of hit points depends on the gem's rarity, as shown below. Can be used only by cursed undead.

LifeGem (Common): Heals 2d4+2. Value: 50gp.

Radiant LifeGem (Uncommon): Heals 4d4+4. Value: 100gp.

Old Radiant LifeGem (Rare): Heals 8d4+8. Value: 500gp.



RED EYE ORB

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement by a cursed undead)

This red soapstone orb had the shape of an unblinking eye. The enchanted eye hunts for Humanity, and guides a killer towards its victim.

By concentrating on the orb for 1 minute (as if concentrating on a spell) the user invades an *Unliving* cursed undead's world. This works as described under Invasion. The user needs to be *Unliving* to use the orb.



The orb can be used once per short or long rest. It is said that other, different colored Eye Orbs exist, which set up different kinds of invasions and give Invaders other bonuses. Can be used only by cursed undead.

Value: 2000gp.

RED SOAPSTONE AMULET

Wondrous item, uncommon

This red amulet helps a hungry undead to hunt for Humanity.

By concentrating on the amulet for 1 minute (as if concentrating on a spell) the user invades an *Unliving* cursed undead's world. This works as described under Invasion, except that if the Invader dies he returns to his world dead instead of at 1 HP. The user doesn't need to be *Unliving* to use the amulet. Once used the amulet can't be used again until the next dusk. Can be used only by cursed undead.

Value: 600gp.



TITANITE

Material, uncommon

Titanite is a rare black metal, that some say are the remains of an old smith god. Creatures with proper proficiency and knowledge can use Titanite shards to enhance non-magical weapons, shields, armors, or spellcasting focuses.

Four hours of dedicated work are required per Titanite shard to enhance a piece of equipment. The amount of shards needed is listed below.

Weapons

- +1: 1 shard.
- +2: 4 shards.
- +3: 16 shards.

Spellcasting focus. A focus improves spells. While holding the focus, the user gains a bonus to spell attack rolls and to the saving throw DC of appropriate spells.

- +1: 1 shard.
- +2: 5 shards.
- +3: 20 shards.

Armor and shields

- +1: 1 shard.
- +2: 6 shards.
- +3: 24 shards.

Value: 1000gp per shard.



TWINKLING TITANITE

Material, rare

No one knows for sure what creates this gleaming, powerful class of Titanite, but a skilled craftsman can create and improve on legends with it.

Twinkling Titanite works like its mundane cousin, except it can be used to create or improve magical items.

Value: 1500gp per shard.

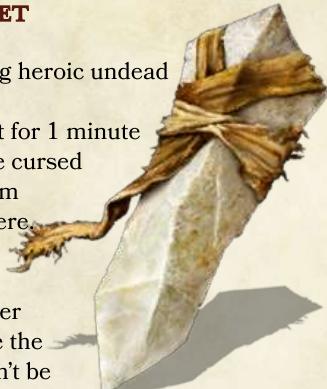


WHITE SOAPSTONE AMULET

Wondrous item, uncommon

This white amulet helps guiding heroic undead through the worlds. By concentrating on the amulet for 1 minute (as if concentrating on a spell) the cursed undead is Summoned by a random *Unliving* cursed undead somewhere. This works as described under Summoning, except that the user chooses to be summoned. The user doesn't need to be *Unliving* to use the amulet. Once used the amulet can't be used again until the next dawn. Can be used only by cursed undead.

Value: 600gp.



IMPROVING EQUIPMENT

Improving one's equipment is part of the Dark Souls experience, but also part its lore, so we felt the need to include Titanite smithing in the rules.

Characters in a Dark Souls campaign are expected to carry some artifacts, be them magic items or mundane but improved equipment. And with the expected level of lethality they need all the help they can get.

That said we recommend that the DM doesn't allow both armor and shield enhancements to stack, as this can break bounded accuracy faster than a boss can kill you the first time you fight it... That's something we recommend for all 5e games, not only Dark Souls' ones.

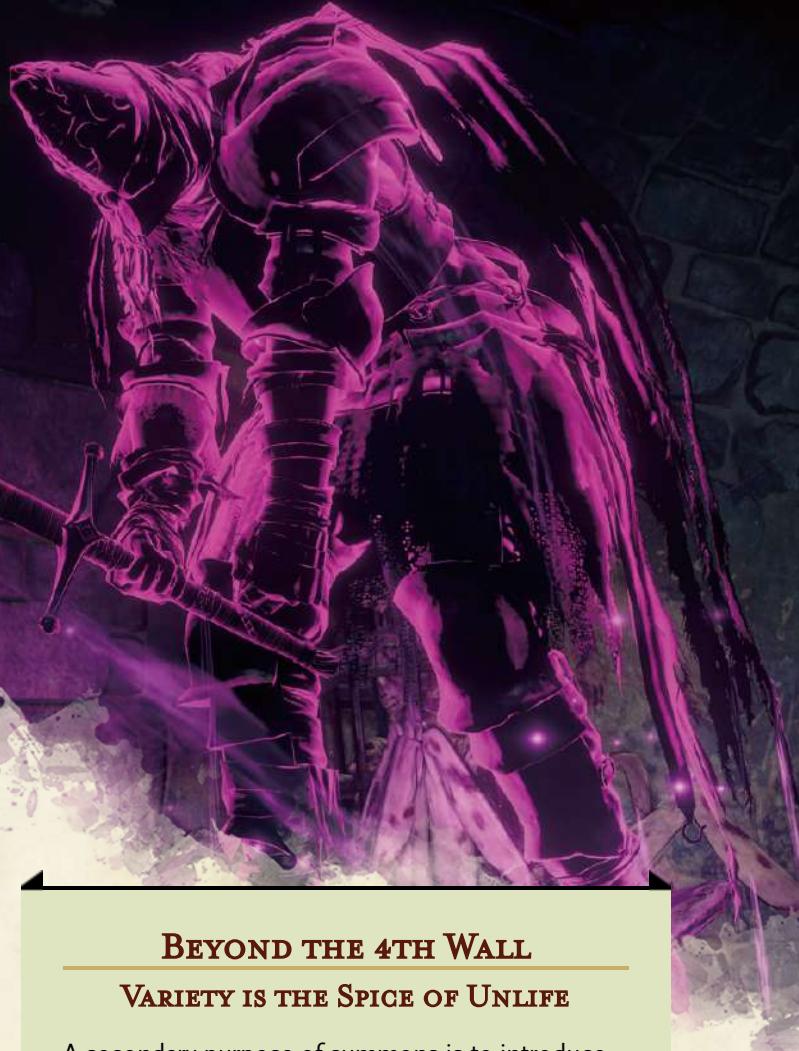
If the DM take our recommendation then a character may apply only the highest enhancement bonus between his armor or shield.



PART 2

DUNGEON MASTER





PHANTOMS

Summonings and Invasions are part of the lore of the souls universe, and not just a gameplay mechanic divorced from lore. Time and space are strange in the lands that the games take place in, and when an undead is infused with Humanity it can sense heroes from different places and different times, and summon their Phantoms to help him. But it can also be sensed by other, predatory undead, who would like nothing more than take their precious Humanity away for themselves.

The player section has all the rules on how summoning and invasion works, but as a DM how does one handle them? Are invasions meant to be simply another kind of encounter? And won't summons affect balance? This section includes guidelines as to how weave these mechanical aspects seamlessly into a Souls experience.

SUMMONING

From a mechanical point of view, Summons are meant as a bit of help for the players. Maybe they need a little hand against a specific opponent, or the DM feels like introducing a more meaningful challenge and thinks a couple of extra hands on deck would make the experience smoother.

As any DM knows there are many ways to introduce a bit more power to the group, including new abilities, spells or items. One of the best ways to do so is by introducing something temporary, something that can be taken away if the intended balance is missed. An out-of-hand artifact can be taken away by story reasons, and if done right it can be seen as a natural part of the story, being remembered as a nice, if temporary, power up. An unbalanced spell, feat or special ability, however, is much harder to remove without making it clear it was for out of character reasons.

Phantoms fit in this spot perfectly. They make the group stronger and add extra versatility, all while being very temporary with their 10 minute duration. The basic summon isn't a specific class power, spell or ability; it's available to any undead with the *Unliving* condition. It's meant to cost no resources at all, but it's also mostly out of the player's control. A player never has any idea what kind of Phantom will be available for summoning, its CR or abilities, and so can't plan on it.

BEYOND THE 4TH WALL

VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF UNLIFE

A secondary purpose of summons is to introduce variety. We can't speak for other games, but on our games players just love guest characters, specially when they can control them. Summons give a DM carte blanche to introduce interesting and flavorful guests without any concern for many of the important aspects of introducing story characters.

The DM doesn't need to worry if the NPC fits the setting; what is he doing there? What are its motivations? Does its race, appearance and powers make sense for the setting? Is it a balanced companion? None of those questions matter.

A summon is pulled from space and time; it's someone from gods know when and where. It needs no reason to help the characters, but it also needs none: The thing a summon and a player character have in common is that both are cursed undead. Bot seek adversity, look for souls, and try to stave off the Curse. And now they're sharing souls and can do no harm to one another.

There's a strong kinship to be found there, even if a temporary one.

Any summon will be a power boost for sure, but the form this boost will take is out of the player's hand. It's effectively extra help under DM fiat, and from a DM's point of view this makes them a valuable, simple tool with no long-term side-effects.

AVAILABLE SUMMONS

As available summons are under the DM control, any method can be used to create the Phantoms. These rules assume that the same rules for Invader creation are used to create helpful summons. Those rules provide a wide array of different CRs that are completely disconnected from player's level. A summon can be of much lower or higher CR than the party, and that's precisely the intent.

The DM also sets how many summons are available at any given time. Below we provide 4 methods for determining how often summons are available. Whatever method is chosen, a cursed undead still needs to be *Unliving* to notice summoning signs.

DM FLAT

The default and simplest method is simply hand-placing summon signs. Summons are only available when the DM says so. Such method can be used to provide summons only when the group might need them, or on story appropriated moments. This is the recommended method for larger groups or for groups where the players would forget to look for summon signs.

AT ANY TIME

Whenever a character is *Unliving* and not currently at his summon limit there are available summons. A DM that goes this route should expect players to summon a lot of help whenever possible. It may get a little tiresome to introduce a new summon every ten minutes of setting time, so a DM using this setting might want to change summon's duration to up to 1 hour.

ROLL FOR IT

Nothing guarantees that there will be a summon sign available at any given moment of time and space for any specific cursed undead. Under this rule a player rolls for summon availability as if he was rolling for random encounters, using any preferred approach to random encounter generation. These rules provide a suggested frequency under the Phantom Generation random tables. If the roll is successful there is one summon available for that character at that place and time; if the character moves away from it, then that specific sign disappears and can't be accessed later (a character can't "bank" summon sign locations).

SHARED STORYTELLING

Another possibility is to use some method of shared storytelling to say that summons are available. Usually this method is used together with DM Fiat, but it might also work with Roll for It. Under this method a player may spend his Inspiration (or equivalent, such as Hero Points) to invoke a summoning sign for his character when he is *Unliving*. This gives another function to the Inspiration mechanic, and with that even another incentive to actively pursue it.



PLAYING A PHANTOM

A Phantom has every reason to work with and protect its summoner. It is sharing souls with it and its allies, and even if the summoner would try to send it further than 30 feet away from the opponents so it wouldn't get a share of souls the Phantom still gets a share as long as its summoner does.

It loses nothing if it or its summoner dies, but as long as both live it has a chance to absorb more souls. Phantoms can then take greater chances that have very little consequences, and most will go to great lengths to protect its summoner and ensure maximum Soul absorption.

With this kind of motivation it's usually for the best to handle a summoned Phantom's stats to a player. The DM already has a lot on its plate, and the player gets a new interesting toy to use for a while. It also doesn't matter if the player ends up using it as a disposable meat shield with no concern for its own safety: Most Phantoms are ok with that tactic as long as it has a chance to get them some extra souls.

A DARKER SIDE TO PHANTOMS

Turning on its summoner is a useless move for a Phantom, as it literally gets no soul when its summoner dies, and if the summoner dies the Phantom returns to its world at 1 HP, which might be pretty dangerous and cost it a death.

Turning on the summoner's allies or provoking a fight to absorb some quick souls probably won't work well either, as the summoner or its allies can dispatch the rogue Phantom. Besides, there are Covenants out there that hunt for such sinners and make them pay. But what if, perhaps, the summoner's cursed undead allies just *happen to die*?

A summon always absorbs souls from creatures within 30 feet of itself or its summoner. While turning against its summoner's allies is probably suicidal and inefficient, a cursed undead might be tempted to allow a summoner's allies to face danger by themselves and not help, hoping for them to die so it can absorb their souls.

Some unethical cursed undead might even try to subtly set up such situations without its summoner noticing. Such dishonorable wretches should be wary however, for if their deception fails they might have to face consequences...

PLAYER SUMMONS

Player characters aren't different from other cursed undead, and can be summoned at any moment while they are *Unliving*. But how does one handle that?

Each and every DM has to find the frequency and pace that works for its group. In some groups one character being summoned and having an interesting chat, challenge or combat by itself against out-of-context foes is thrilling and interesting; in other groups players get bored at any scene that doesn't include their characters, and will do so during this kind of summon.

One can set the frequency of player summons by any method, up to and including by random roll. Player summons should be more infrequent than invasions however, since they usually split the party. Player summons should be used as a tool to introduce different, unique encounters with a twist, instead of a constant stream of one-on-one scenes.

Also note that while usually summons are used for warfare, there's nothing that demands a combat scene when a player is summoned. Sure, the Phantom is there for the extra souls, but sometimes it might be summoned to help with another kind challenge the summoner can't overcome, besides combat: Maybe it was summoned to provide assistance with a physical task; or maybe it was summoned as some kind of deterrence, to act as a bodyguard and avoid violence, for example.

BEYOND THE 4TH WALL

SUDDEN BUT INEVITABLE BETRAYAL

As a DM, avoid using traitorous Phantoms too frequently. While certainly there are some ruthless assholes out there that may surprise players by turning on them at their death's door or by "pulling a Scar" on them and leaving them to die, players will quickly grow tired of Phantoms if they can't put their trust in the majority of them. And that's not the spirit behind *summoning help*.

On the other hand, being a traitorous Phantom is a perfectly reasonable way for a deceptive character to face its challenges when they are summoned elsewhere! That is specially true if you're using the *Player Summons as Hazards* rule.

Just make sure the player understands that there might be consequences for that, as is the case with any other action.



PLAYER SUMMONS AS A HAZARD

Instead of playing a player summon as a complete scene, the DM can instead use a simplified method and treat it as a Hazard, building this encounter as he would build a Trap or a wilderness hazard. Use the rules for Traps (*Dungeon Master Guide* pg. 121) or Simple Traps (*Xanathar's Guide to Everything* pg. 116), or any other favorite rule. Use the encounter's CR in place of Character Level to determine the challenge's DC and damage.

The DM describes the scene and the player declares how he's going to help overcome the challenge, exactly like any other threat or trap. The player then makes a single attack roll, ability test or saving throw the DM finds appropriate to the scene and the player's description.

- **Dramatic Success (natural 20, or beat the DC by 10+):**

The character performed greatly during the time it was summoned, and acquired many souls. The character takes half the listed damage from the threat. It receives 1/4 the amount of Souls of an encounter of that CR.

• **Success:** The character was a helpful Phantom for the duration, and helped its summoner overcome the challenge. The character takes the full listed damage from the threat. It receives 1/8 the amount of Souls of an encounter of that CR.

• **Failure:** The character does not perform well and has little meaningful impact before it's defeated. The defeated character returns to its world at 1 HP. It receives 1/16 the amount of Souls of an encounter of that CR.

- **Dramatic Failure (natural 1, or fail the DC by 10+):**

The character was overwhelmed by the challenge, and one can only help its summoner did well without its help. The defeated character returns to its world at 1 HP. It receives no Souls at all.

GROUP SUMMONS

One of the best ways to play a player summon as a full scene is for all player characters to be summoned at the same. Since this requires for all of them to be *Unliving* at the same time the frequency that this can happen varies wildly from campaign to campaign.

When this happens, however, the encounter proceeds like most encounter that involve the help of summoned Phantoms: the group faces a challenge with the help of some NPCs. The roles are reversed however, and the player characters would do well to protect the npcs and maximize the potential for soul absorption.

As with other Phantom encounters its best to handle the npc sheets to the players; while in character the scene might be about the summoners, out of character the game is still about the *players*, and the players should have the chance of playing exciting, varied scenes.

BEYOND THE 4TH WALL

A BIT OF FANSERVICE

As summons can come from anywhere, it's also an excellent time to explore, experiment and improvise. Want to use some interesting npc stats you found on the web? Go for it. Want to give players a taste of a legendary, badass npc sheet? Sounds fun.

Want to introduce some easter eggs with characters from other settings or even mediums? The Fire links many different realities.

Want to introduce an even bigger fanservice and hand out the used sheet of a memorable retired character from a previous campaign at the peak of its glorious power, specially to his old player? Go for it!

A summon will last only 10 minutes at most and it certainly won't destroy your game.



INVASIONS

While Summons are an excellent way for the DM to introduce some help on the spot, to make things easier, and to diversify player's experience, Invasions serve another mechanical purpose. From the player's perspective an Invasion is almost like any encounter: Its character must face a challenge that just appeared. But the devil lies in the details, and from the DM point of view Invasions have three qualities that make them a different kind of encounter.

RANDOMNESS

First of all, Invasions are random. While the DM has the power to hand-pick and place invasions according to a schedule, up to and including a daily xp budget, invasions are random in universe.

Characters might be prepared to face Ice-themed beasts, carrying beast-affecting and fire damage dealing items and spells, and all of a sudden be invaded by a towering heavy armored unarmed sorcerer warrior who fights with its spell-enhanced armored fists. Cursed undead never know what kind of cursed undead will invade their realms, or its expected strength. Invasions break the routine of an adventure without necessarily breaking its pace.

A DM might certainly insert Invasions as random encounters and break a slow pace, but he can also substitute a normal encounter for an invasion and just break the current theme of challenges with something completely different. The rules presented further in this chapter capture this randomness very well: There is a wide range of available challenge ratings, npc stats, templates, and even names and descriptions to pick from or roll.

Being invaded may happen at any moment while a character is *Unliving*. Being *Unliving* is a great condition, with beneficial perks on top of staving off Hollowing. It allows for the cursed undead to benefit from traditional healing spells (by choosing to count as humanoid instead of undead), to use specific items, to summon help. But it also brings with it the possibility of an invasion happening at random.

The DM should make sure that choosing to become *Unliving* is a player's choice, and not the default state player characters stay in. When *Unliving* a character literally sees shadows in every corners, being able to almost pierce across the veil and see images of Phantoms from different worlds going on their business. They never know when one of those might perceive them and invade, or if that's even possible.

RUTHLESSNESS

Dark Phantoms are ruthless. That's not saying that in their own home worlds they are necessarily *bad* people (although most of those who make an habit of practicing invasions wouldn't be considered *nice* either...), but during an invasion they have a very clear goal: They have 10 minutes to ensure the host dies, so they can absorb its Humanity. If they fail, for any reason, they lose their own Humanity and return to their world. It's a gamble.

The worst part is that different from being summoned, which might happen at any time and with no imput from the Phantom, no invader invades by accident: They make a conscious effort to do so, and they enter the gamble fully aware of the consequences of failure. And most do so very well equipped and intending to stack the odds on their favor.

A host can try to bribe or beg, but a dark Phantom can't understand anything people say in the invading world. Even if the host somehow bribes it (say, by visibly offering some Humanities by way of mime), anything the dark Phantom picks up is left behind when it leaves, and if the host didn't die it still loses its own Humanity. Some dark Phantom might even have been moved or deceived into letting their prey go in the past, but once fooled there's no way it will fall for it again.

While certainly there are multiple honor-obsessed invading Phantoms out there, that clearly and openly appear before their opponents and give them a chance to prepare for an honorable duel, such souls are in it for the thrill of the duel and not for the humanities. Maybe back in their own world they have a handy stack of humanities which they might gamble away for the thrill of the duel. Maybe finding the perfect opponent is more important than losing Humanity. Different people have different priorities after all, specially across multiple worlds and time periods.

Most dark Phantoms, however, are in it for Humanity. They don't want to lose what they have and they want more. They might be psychotically addicted to killing others and taking their hope away, or they might be apologetic attackers that are only doing that to avoid becoming Hollow. Whatever their reasons might be, they can't communicate them.

And so most invaders are as brutally pragmatic as they can. Some try to lure their victims into facing dangers already in their world, hiding and waiting until a battle is well underway before striking. Some create elaborate traps and ambushes. Some use magic to disappear or disguise themselves. While it's impossible for them to bring other Phantom or help by "traditional" means, some use magic to summon lesser help. Most bring specialized undead hunting equipment and weapons. For them no tactic is too to gain Humanity.

The DM should make sure an encounter with a dark Phantom should always have this feeling of immediate danger. Players don't know what they will face, but they know it will be tough and possibly unfair.

Reward

Last but not least, invasions have a clear reward.

Some DMs might simplify encounter building as if violence and combat were the *end*, as if the combat was the *reward*. Most experienced DMs, however, understand that combat is actually the *means* to an end, and devise objectives for both sides of a conflict. A guardian might not want to kill the player characters, being content with just driving them away. An adventurer-devouring monster might just be looking for an easy meal and unless it's starving it won't risk its life if the PCs prove too tough. There's no *reward* in staying.

Encounters against Phantoms, on the other hand, have a very clear objective: The Phantom wants to kill the host. The host wants to survive the invasion. The reward is the same for both sides: *Precious Humanity*.

This introduces an interesting dynamic: Kill or be killed. There's no way around it. Invasions make for very primal, violent encounters. They're about killing an opponent whose underlying reasons are unknown, whom you can't reason or speak with, that has nothing to lose, and apparently has no morals whatsoever. It's the ultimate dehumanization of the opposition, the utopic classic D&D monster *out of nowhere that wants to kill you for no particular reason, meant only to be fought and looted, nothing else*.

Or is it? Invaders have different reasons for what they do, and today's repelled invader might be tomorrow's helpful summon. As typical for the Souls universe, players must find the answer to this question by themselves. Or just nod and go their own way. Either way works for the Darksign.

INVASION FREQUENCY

As is the case with player summoning, each DM should come up with his own solution for how often players are invaded. Below we provide 3 main methods to determine Invasion frequency:

DM FIAT

Just like summons, Invasions might happen only when the DM calls for them. The DM just plan for them like any other given encounter. From the point of view of the players an Invasion is always random, so no flavor is lost by using this method.

BEYOND THE 4TH WALL

POOR, POOR DARK PHANTOMS!

Invaders start with some disadvantages. They appear at random on a strange place they don't know, while the victim might know it very well.

They don't have allies, while the victim might have *Unliving* and Phantom ones.

They can sense their target's location, but the victim is aware of the Invasion and might have plenty of time to set up defenses.

And last but not least the "victim" might well be a "*lure*", a very well prepared cursed undead waiting for invasions to punish invaders and drain them of their Humanity.

Few would pay mind to the invader's lot in unlife however: They entered that gamble on their own volition, hoping to find weak prey to bully, murder and rob. Most figure that if they get trounced by the victim... well, they had it coming.

When using this option, the DM should aim for at least one out of every 6 encounters being an Invasion. The DM must take into consideration that different from other possibly violent encounters where players might *choose or not* to use violence to handle a situation, an Invasion is almost always solved by violent action.

ROLL FOR IT

Under this rule Invasions substitute for random encounters. The DM still prepares the adventure and challenges as normal, but uses his preferred random encounter method, substituting the possible encounters for the Random Phantom tables if any character has the *Unliving* condition.

SHARED STORYTELLING

Another possibility is to use some method of shared storytelling to provide for Invasions. This method can be used by itself or together with any of the other two. Under this method a player whose character has the *Unliving* condition may ask for an Invasion. If the DM agrees the character gains Inspiration and an Invasion targeting that character takes place. The DM might also offer the whole group Inspiration; if they accept an Invasion happens.

This method has the typical advantages of shared storytelling, mainly putting agency on player's hands and allowing them to set the pace they prefer, and is a natural complement to the DM fiat method.

RANDOM TABLES



This section contains a method for generating random encounters with Phantoms, be them summoned friendly ones or dark Invaders. One can quickly generate interesting and quirky npcs with them whenever players require a summon or are going to be invaded.

RANDOM PHANTOMS BY CR

This section is a random encounter generation table for Phantoms. This table makes use of NPC stats found in the *Monster Manual* (MM) and *Volo's Guide to Monsters* (VGM), in addition to two free products found on the DMs Guild:

• **5e NPC Foe Expansion (FE):** Adds alternate CR varieties of the humanoid foes from the basic rules, meant to fill in the gaps of CR.

This product is specially useful for some types of foes that were present only at high (assassin) or low (knight) levels.

• **35 Versatile NPCs (35):** Adds different, quirky npc foes stats. Most of them have an interesting ability or gimmick.

Besides those sources, however, the DM can also include any other stats he wishes to, replacing any rolled entry by a creature of equivalent Challenge Rating. One can also even use player character sheets as summoned allied Phantoms, especially if the DM wants to bring characters from other campaigns as easter eggs.

HOW TO USE THIS TABLE

When it's time to create a Phantom simply roll 1d100 and consult this table. All the NPC statistics are assumed to have the Elite Creature template applied to them; that is already reflected in their CR.

RANDOM PHANTOM BY CR

| 1d100 | CR | Creature | Source | 1d100 | CR | Creature | Source |
|-------|----|---------------------|--------|-------|----|------------------------|--------|
| 1 | 1 | Acolyte | MM | 26 | 3 | Cult Fanatic | MM |
| 2 | 1 | Apprentice | FE | 27 | 3 | Druid | MM |
| 3 | 1 | Apprentice Wizard | VGM | 28 | 3 | Guard Sergeant | FE |
| 4 | 1 | Brawler | 35 | 29 | 3 | Outland Veteran | 35 |
| 5 | 1 | Neophyte Druid | FE | 30 | 3 | Overseer | 35 |
| 6 | 1 | Rugged Warrior | 35 | 31 | 3 | Priest | MM |
| 7 | 1 | Scoundrel | 35 | 32 | 3 | Ruffian | FE |
| 8 | 1 | Scout | MM | 33 | 4 | Archer | VGM |
| 9 | 1 | Thug | MM | 34 | 4 | Illusionist | VGM |
| 10 | 2 | Agile Fighter | 35 | 35 | 4 | Journeyman Mage | 35 |
| 11 | 2 | Arcane Trickster | 35 | 36 | 4 | Knight | MM |
| 12 | 2 | Beast Master | 35 | 37 | 4 | Magician | FE |
| 13 | 2 | Brigand | FE | 38 | 4 | Martial Arts Adept | VGM |
| 14 | 2 | Defender | 35 | 39 | 4 | Mystic | 35 |
| 15 | 2 | Duelist | 35 | 40 | 4 | Performer | 35 |
| 16 | 2 | Relentless Fighter | 35 | 41 | 4 | Seasoned Hunter | 35 |
| 17 | 2 | Soldier | 35 | 42 | 4 | Shaman | 35 |
| 18 | 2 | Spy | MM | 43 | 4 | Swashbuckler | VGM |
| 19 | 2 | Squire | FE | 44 | 4 | Veteran | MM |
| 20 | 3 | Artificer Alchemist | 35 | 45 | 5 | Agent | FE |
| 21 | 3 | Artificer Gunsmith | 35 | 46 | 5 | Chieftain | FE |
| 22 | 3 | Bandit Captain | MM | 47 | 5 | Martial Commander | 35 |
| 23 | 3 | Bard | VGM | 48 | 5 | Spellsword | 35 |
| 24 | 3 | Berserker | MM | 49 | 5 | Warlock of the Archfey | VGM |
| 25 | 3 | Cavalry Specialist | 35 | 50 | 5 | Whirling Swordsman | 35 |

RANDOM PHANTOM BY CR (CONT.)

| 1d100 | CR | Creature | Source | 1d100 | CR | Creature | Source |
|-------|----|------------------------------|--------|-------|----|----------------------|--------|
| 51 | 6 | Enchanter | VGM | 76 | 8 | Slayer | 35 |
| 52 | 6 | Footpad | FE | 77 | 8 | Warlock of the Fiend | VGM |
| 53 | 6 | Gladiator | MM | 78 | 9 | Assassin | MM |
| 54 | 6 | Heterodox Priest | 35 | 79 | 9 | Blackguard | VGM |
| 55 | 6 | Honor-Bound Fighter | 35 | 80 | 9 | Diviner | VGM |
| 56 | 6 | Inquisitor | 35 | 81 | 9 | Guardian | FE |
| 57 | 6 | Kraken Priest | VGM | 82 | 9 | Hero | FE |
| 58 | 6 | Master Thief | VGM | 83 | 10 | Abjurer | VGM |
| 59 | 6 | Paladin | 35 | 84 | 10 | Champion | VGM |
| 60 | 6 | Sentinel | FE | 85 | 10 | Champion Knight | FE |
| 61 | 6 | Transmuter | VGM | 86 | 10 | Evoker | VGM |
| 62 | 6 | War Lord | FE | 87 | 10 | Necromancer | VGM |
| 63 | 6 | Warchief | 35 | 88 | 10 | War Priest | VGM |
| 64 | 7 | Adept | FE | 89 | 11 | Hood | FE |
| 65 | 7 | Conjurer | VGM | 90 | 11 | Warden | FE |
| 66 | 7 | Cult Disciple | FE | 91 | 12 | High Lord | FE |
| 67 | 7 | Mage | MM | 92 | 12 | Swordmaster | FE |
| 68 | 7 | Master Druid | FE | 93 | 12 | Warlord | VGM |
| 69 | 7 | Ninja | 35 | 94 | 13 | Archdruid | VGM |
| 70 | 7 | Warlock of the Great Old One | VGM | 95 | 13 | Archmage | MM |
| 71 | 8 | Bastion | 35 | 96 | 13 | Archpriest | FE |
| 72 | 8 | Eternal Hunter | 35 | 97 | 13 | Brigand King | FE |
| 73 | 8 | Master Swordsman | 35 | 98 | 13 | Master Assassin | FE |
| 74 | 8 | Outlaw | FE | 99 | 13 | Master Cultist | FE |
| 75 | 8 | Ruler Warrior | 35 | 100 | 13 | Overlord | FE |

RANDOM PHANTOM TRAITS

This section provides a rather large table that allows the DM to generate interesting names, titles and appearances for their Phantoms.

HOW TO USE THIS TABLE

To generate a random Phantom, roll 4d10. Pick any combination of the results to generate a number between 01 and 100, and generate 4 of them. Use one combination to pick one entry from each of the columns.

- **Adjective:** A prefix that comes before the title. You can use an adjective either by itself or with a Title.
- **Title:** Some of those can be used as either prefixes or suffixes; to use them as suffixes just add “the” in front of them. You can use a title either by itself or with an Adjective.
- **Name:** Self-explanatory. There are male, female and neutral names mixed in, favoring archaic spelling.
- **Description:** A short description with something eye-catching about the Phantom.

RANDOM INVASION FREQUENCY

The frequency of random invasions is determined by the DM's chosen random encounter generation method. In case there isn't one, use the following:

- **Check:** Check for encounters by rolling a d20. On a roll of 18-20, an encounter takes place.
- **Pick one of the following frequencies:**
 - **Vanilla:** Check once during the day and once at night. This is used in many published modules.
 - **Respawn:** Check once per Long Rest, including those by Bonfires. Takes into account the fact that cursed undeads have an easier time recovering.
 - **Skyrim Dragons:** Check at rest and every time a player rolls a 1 on an attack roll, ability test or saving throw. This method has the potential to turn any situation into a tense invasion.

RANDOM PHANTOM TRAITS

| 1d100 Adjective | Title | Name | "This Phantom" |
|-----------------|---|-------------|--|
| 1 | Abandoned "Abbot/Abess" (both) | Addison | Has a brown mohawk that draws a lot of attention. |
| 2 | Abnormal "Adept" (both) | Adela | Has a hunchback and a lazy eye that don't seem to interfere with its prowess. |
| 3 | Acrid "Assassin" (both) | Alison | Has a lanky build, and carries aggressive-looking gear. |
| 4 | Ambitious "Bandit" (both) | Alistair | Has a lanky build, and openly wears glasses. |
| 5 | Ancient "Baron" (both) | Annabel | Has a pierced lip and dark skin, and dresses in warm climate gear. |
| 6 | Angelic "Bishop" (both) | Anthoinette | Has a sardonic smile, a compact build and golden-brown skin. |
| 7 | Anguished "Blademaster" (both) | Arnold | Has a short, squat build, brown skin and long fiery red hair. |
| 8 | Apostle "Cannibal" (both) | Arthur | Has a tall build, long brown-black hair and dark gray eyes. |
| 9 | Bashful "Commander" (both) | Ava | Has blonde hair cut jaggedly and amateurishly, and the face of a commoner. |
| 10 | Billowy "Conqueror" (both) | Baldric | Has brown hair drawn into a tight ponytail with a clover scrunchie. |
| 11 | Bitter "Consul" (both) | Bartholomew | Has brown hair that is long and unkempt, hiding a scarred face. |
| 12 | Blighted "Counselor" (both) | Beatrix | Has ebony skin and a lanky build. Although graceful, it's also very aggressive. |
| 13 | Blind "Curator" (both) | Belmont | Has ebony skin and narrow, pale blue eyes. |
| 14 | Careless "Death-Weaver" (both) | Bertrand | Has elaborate, fashionable gear, and openly flirts around. |
| 15 | Corrupt "Delegate" (both) | Brice | Has ghostly, glowing blue eyes and deathly pale skin. |
| 16 | Cowardly "Demon" (both) | Bryde | Has grey skin and wears dark clothing covering most of its gear. |
| 17 | Cruel "Destiny of Effigies" (suffix) | Carmen | Has hair dyed in an outrageous color. |
| 18 | Dangerous "Divinity of Reason" (suffix) | Cecilia | Has long amber hair drawn into a two-foot long braid. Its eyes are likewise amber. |
| 19 | Dark "Engineer" (both) | Celeste | Has no hair, including eyebrows, and a gloomy face. |
| 20 | Deaf "Father/Mother" (both) | Chartain | Has orange colored, wild-looking hair all over the place. |
| 21 | Defiant "First of Light" (suffix) | Chloe | Has pale skin and a perpetual angry look on its face. |
| 22 | Delirious "from nowhere" (suffix) | Claudia | Has piercing blue eyes, blonde hair and pasty skin. It is very tall and tough. |
| 23 | Deluded "Gladiator" (both) | Cole | Has pink straight hair and glittering red eyes. |
| 24 | Depressed "Guardian" (both) | Cristiana | Has raven-black hair and pale skin. |
| 25 | Deranged "Hedge of Solitude" (suffix) | Cuthbert | Has beautiful hair, neatly combed and coiffured. |
| 26 | Diligent "Herald" (both) | Daniel | Has red long hair with streaks of auburn, that is pulled back with small grey clips. |
| 27 | Disguised "High Priest" (both) | David | Has shaved head and a dull look. |
| 28 | Drunk "Hunter" (both) | Dominy | Has short brown hair kept in a military style, and a serious face. |
| 29 | Elder "Inquisitor" (both) | Donner | Has short, dyed hair. It looks deceptively innocent, even naïve. |
| 30 | Elite "Judge of Stars" (suffix) | Dorothe | Has silver hair that is visibly thinning. |
| 31 | Enchanted "Kingslayer" (both) | Dyana | Has spiky hair and carries oversized weapons. |
| 32 | Enraged "Knight" (both) | Elaisse | Has straight silver hair and carries a musical instrument. |
| 33 | Ethereal "Mage" (both) | Eleanor | Has thick toned arms and a paunchy gut. |
| 34 | Euphoric "Magi" (both) | Elyzabeth | Has unkempt hair and a scarred, worn face. |

RANDOM PHANTOM TRAITS (CONT.)

| 1d100 Adjective | Title | Name | "This Phantom" |
|------------------|---------------------------------|------------|--|
| 35 Exarch | "Mask os Aspects" (suffix) | Emanuel | Has well-kept, combed hair, and an attractive face unmarred by war. |
| 36 Fearless | "Minister" (both) | Emeria | Has dreadlocks hanging over a full, gloomy face. |
| 37 Golden | "Missionary" (both) | Emlinie | Is adorned with expensive silk clothing, dyed in bright colors. |
| 38 Graceful | "of Alken" (suffix) | Esmond | Is bald on top and has large chestnut tufts of hair around its ears. |
| 39 Grand | "of Astora" (suffix) | Eustace | Is bristling with hidden weapons, mostly daggers. |
| 40 Grave | "of Balder" (suffix) | Evelyn | Is charismatic and smiles a lot, but hates foolish bravery. |
| 41 Great | "of Berenike" (suffix) | Florens | Is clearly not human, a member of another species. |
| 42 Grieving | "of Carim" (suffix) | Francis | Is completely drunk, staggering around. |
| 43 Grounded | "of Catarina" (suffix) | Fridgia | Is covered in thick slabs of muscle that give it an imposing figure. |
| 44 Hallowed | "of Drangleic" (suffix) | Gared | Is draped in fineries, but all of this conceals hidden weapons. |
| 45 Hollow | "of Forossa" (suffix) | Gillian | Is generally well dressed albeit a few years behind the times. |
| 46 Hungry | "of Heide" (suffix) | Godfrey | Is handsome and brave. It takes pains to teach as much as it can. |
| 47 Imaginary | "of Jugo" (suffix) | Guston | Is huge and very fat, although surprisingly agile for its size. |
| 48 Infernal | "of Lanafir" (suffix) | Haimirich | Is just a force animating its gear, and doesn't communicate at all. |
| 49 Innocent | "of Leydia" (suffix) | Helenor | Is lazy and pudgy, and recites poetry. |
| 50 Insane | "of Lindelt" (suffix) | Hilda | Is missing an eye and its face is severely sunburned. |
| 51 Judicious | "of Melfia" (suffix) | Hilith | Is moderately tanned and wears hot climate gear. |
| 52 Lethal | "of Mirrah" (suffix) | Ingham | Is old and has beady, tired eyes. |
| 53 Lord | "of Olaphis" (suffix) | Isolde | Is quiet and attentive, silently listening everything. |
| 54 Luminous | "of Oolacite" (suffix) | Jakys | Is quiet and sneaky, favoring dishonesty whenever possible. |
| 55 Macabre | "of the Dark" (suffix) | Jellion | Is scrawny and has patchy white stubble. |
| 56 Mad | "of the East" (suffix) | Janet | Is skeletal and almost hollow-like. |
| 57 Marked | "of the Fire" (suffix) | Jessamine | Is tall and slender, with long, thin arms. |
| 58 Masked | "of the Great Swamp" (suffix) | Josephine | Is tall and very muscular, with large scars across its immense body. |
| 59 Massive | "of the North" (suffix) | Joyse | Is tall, broad shouldered and powerfully built. |
| 60 Monstrous | "of the Sacred Intent" (suffix) | Katelyn | Is very agile and fast for its size and gear. |
| 61 Mute | "of the South" (suffix) | Katherine | Is very attractive and vainly flaunts its beauty around. |
| 62 Mysterious | "of the West" (suffix) | Kenrick | Is very honest and honorable, and loves fair duels. |
| 63 Nocturnal | "of the Wicked" (suffix) | Khellus | Is very sexist with members of the opposite sex. |
| 64 Novice | "of Vinheim" (suffix) | Laurentius | Is very vain and is obsessed with its appearance. |
| 65 Noxious | "of Volgen" (suffix) | Lettice | Looks like a beggar by the looks and state of its gear. |
| 66 Old-Fashioned | "of Zena" (suffix) | Lloyd | Looks like a blacksmith, and visibly carries a smith's hammer. |
| 67 Paragon | "Oracle" (both) | Lowell | Looks like a painter of sorts, and visibly carries painter's supplies. |
| 68 Petty | "Overlord" (both) | Maddeline | Looks like a wizard, by the looks of its gear. |
| 69 Powerful | "Paladin" (both) | Mathild | Looks the part of a navigator, judging by its choice of gear. |

RANDOM PHANTOM TRAITS (CONT.)

| 1d100 Adjective | Title | Name | "This Phantom" |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|-----------|---|
| 70 Prime | "Patriarch/Matriarch" (both) | Mathye | Looks the part of a priest or person of the cloth. |
| 71 Proud | "Preacher" (both) | Merewyn | Openly carries a fan with it everywhere and carries itself as the perfect aristocrat. |
| 72 Psychotic | "Priest" (both) | Mirabelle | Openly carries a satchel filed with junk. |
| 73 Putrid | "Prince" (both) | Ophelia | Openly carries proof it's a member of royalty. |
| 74 Radiant | "Puppet of Sorrow" (suffix) | Orrick | Openly carries the colors of an unknown kingdom or organization. |
| 75 Rebelious | "Purveyor of Patience" (suffix) | Osric | Openly carries trophies from its previous victims. |
| 76 Reckless | "Ravager" (both) | Paige | Openly carries what seems to be a famous, legendary weapon. |
| 77 Righteous | "Reaper" (both) | Patrick | Wears a collared shirt and plain pants, a black scarf around the waist and a bandolier diagonally across its shirt. |
| 78 Serene | "Rogue" (both) | Pelinne | Wears a faded coat and loose pants complete with top hat. |
| 79 Severe | "Scout" (both) | Percival | Wears a fine chain shirt, which it covers with heavy cloaks and clothing. |
| 80 Skillfull | "Seducer/Seductress" (both) | Philippe | Wears a gaudy-looking jester outfit. |
| 81 Somber | "Seer" (both) | Powle | Wears a mask to hide its face. |
| 82 Sore | "Seer" (both) | Randall | Wears a simple robe with stripes complete with hood that hides its face. |
| 83 Splendid | "Sentinel" (suffix) | Reginald | Wears blood-splattered clothing and gear. |
| 84 Spotless | "Siege of Death" (suffix) | Reynard | Wears brightly colored, impractical-looking gear. |
| 85 Squalid | "Shadow" (both) | Richard | Wears cold climate gear and a number of mystic trinkets. |
| 86 Tired | "Slayer of Kin" (both) | Robyn | Wears equipment that is very tidy and neat. |
| 87 Troubled | "Slayer" (both) | Rose | Wears exotic-looking, crystalline gear. |
| 88 Unbreakable | "Sorcerer" (both) | Samantha | Wears gear that seems fit for a desert climate. |
| 89 Unsightly | "the Bloodied" (suffix) | Samson | Wears goggles to shield its eyes, and carries a rather large backpack. |
| 90 Vigilant | "the Dragonborn" (suffix) | Sarah | Wears mismatched gear clearly taken from defeated foes. |
| 91 Violent | "the Incorrputible" (suffix) | Sylphie | Wears rags and sports a simple walking cane. |
| 92 Voiceless | "the Rapturous" (suffix) | Symond | Wears rings and necklaces with large, colorful, expensive gems. |
| 93 Vulgar | "the Reconcilier" (suffix) | Sysley | Wears round tiny glasses practically rammed into its face, and seems very smart. |
| 94 Wakeful | "the Unborn" (suffix) | Theda | Wears simple and functional military gear. |
| 95 Warped | "Tribune" (both) | Theodore | Wears skinny clothing, tight-fitting armor and a cloak with the hood down. |
| 96 Wicked | "Vanguard" (both) | Ulric | Wears spiky, dark gear that is stained with blood. |
| 97 Wild | "Violator" (both) | Voyce | Wears the gear of a foreign mystic and has strange customs. |
| 98 Wretched | "Warlock" (both) | Wilham | Wears the gear of a jungle dweller. |
| 99 Young | "Warrior" (both) | Wineburg | Wears the road beaten gear of a warrior, patchwork but functional. |
| 100 Zealous | "Witch" (both) | Zacheus | Wears very little to cover its modesty. |

FOES



The Souls universe is full of powerful, iconic creatures, and the games' opponents are praised for the AI and their varied, challenging movesets, specially the bosses. This section introduces rules to make fights more special, and introduces some converted creatures from the series.

"BOSS-TYPE" TEMPLATES

While a good DM can make any scene, specially combat, seem vivid and vibrant, the game system limits what foes can actually achieve, specially given the vicissitudes of the action economy. 5e can be a very hard system to emulate the cinematic, all-powerful abilities of the setting's more powerful creatures as single creature boss fights.

Fortunately the 5th edition ruleset gives us the Legendary Creature rules, which helps to alleviate the problems of action economy that come from pitting a single creature against 3+ characters. In a dark souls games this is even more exacerbated by the possibility of allied summons. To mitigate the problem we introduce the following two templates. These can be applied to any creature to create a more memorable version of them.

- **Elite Creature:** The Elite creature makes for "miniboss" creatures, that can do a bit more but aren't that much more of a challenge, which is reflected in its CR. The DM should become familiar with this template at the very least, since these rules assume that all dark Phantoms have it applied to their base stats.

- **Legendary Creature:** The Legendary Creature template, on the other hand, makes for tactically challenging creatures, and the CR change shows. While the increased HP won't make much of a difference for higher CR creatures, the fact that those creatures tend to have much more useful special abilities, that can be put to good use by the Special Ability legendary action, more than make up for it.

Note: These templates make *no* assumption as to what reduced HP rule each DM is using, and are presented with default 5e HP assumptions. If using our provided rules for HP reduction one should reduce these values by half. If using any other rule make sure to apply those rules to this increase.

WHY ELITE PHANTOMS?

Truth be told, player characters on a dark souls campaign have a noticeable advantage over the undead from the games: Friends. Sure, of course you can always play with two summoned friends who will always be with you when the Invader comes, but in reality most players face invaders alone or maybe with a random Phantom companion. It just makes sense for the story: The player characters of the soul series are loners on a lonely world.

Player characters on Dark Souls campaigns, on the other hand, usually have allies in the form of other player characters. Granted, only player characters under the *Unliving* condition get a chance to directly help, but even those who aren't *Unliving* can buff their friend. It's just the nature of the story: Player characters in a dark souls D&D campaign are part of a group effort.

Modifying every invader to have the Elite template doesn't change things much; the +1 CR isn't such a great difference in practice. D&D encounter building, the CR system and the XP budget system are about attrition, making players spend or conserve resources. But a Dark Souls campaigns deconstructs this trope, allowing for almost endless easy rest and retries, something almost no other D&D character has access to. And while a CR 2 creature probably is better at the attrition game and makes players spend more resources than a CR 1 creature with the Elite template, it's also probably not as fun and memorable as the elite.

In the end the idea is to not necessarily make the encounters with Phantoms artificially more *challenging* (in the "war of attrition" way) by CR inflation, but more *engaging*, different from the typical encounter. And if nothing else the 1/day Legendary Resistance trait grants invading Phantoms one possible guaranteed success on the Undead Fortitude ability.



ELITE CREATURE

Elite Creatures receive the following changes:

CR: +1

HP: +20

Legendary Resistance (1/Day). If the elite creature fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Legendary Action (1/turn). Can take 1 Legendary Action, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Spent legendary actions are regained at the start of each turn:

- **Attack.** The elite creature makes one attack.

- **Cantrip.** The elite creature casts a cantrip, provided it knows one.

- **Move.** The elite creature moves up to its speed without provoking Opportunity Attacks.

LEGENDARY CREATURE

Legendary Creatures receive the following changes:

CR: +3

HP: +40

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the legendary creature fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Legendary Action (3/turn). Can take 3 Legendary Actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Spent legendary actions are regained at the start of each turn:

- **Attack.** The legendary creature makes one attack.

- **Cantrip.** The legendary creature casts a cantrip, provided it knows one.

- **Move.** The legendary creature moves up to its speed without provoking Opportunity Attacks.

- **Multiattack (Costs 2 Actions).** The legendary creature uses its multiattack, provided it already has such an action option.

- **Special Ability (Costs 2 Actions).** The legendary creature uses one of its special abilities that require an action, provided that it has such an ability.

- **Cast a Spell (Costs 3 Actions).** The legendary creature casts a spell, provided it is able to cast spells.



FINAL WORDS

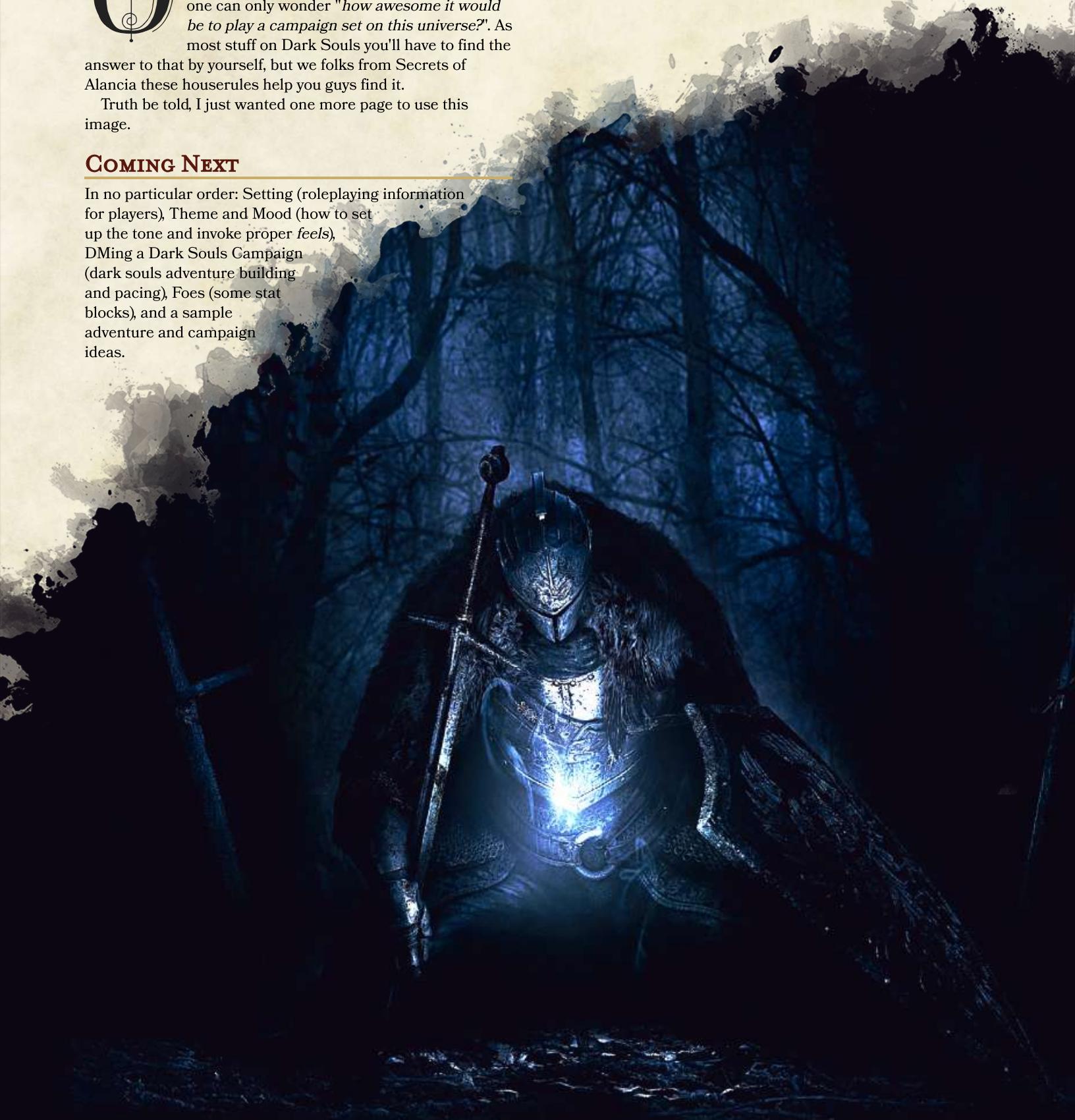
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nce you get past the *Git Gud* and other gamer phases, one finds that the Dark Souls series has such a rich lore, and is able to invoke so many feelings with its moody atmosphere, that one can only wonder "*how awesome it would be to play a campaign set on this universe?*". As most stuff on Dark Souls you'll have to find the answer to that by yourself, but we folks from Secrets of Alancia these houserules help you guys find it.

Truth be told, I just wanted one more page to use this image.

COMING NEXT

In no particular order: Setting (roleplaying information for players), Theme and Mood (how to set up the tone and invoke proper *feels*), DMing a Dark Souls Campaign (dark souls adventure building and pacing), Foes (some stat blocks), and a sample adventure and campaign ideas.



LINK THE FIRE

...OR DON'T

A world half empty faces the dreaded Curse of Undeath, as the end of the Age of Fire draws near. Do you have the will to go on? Seek adversity, or give up and become Hollow.

Inside you'll find tools for setting your D&D games on the gloomy universe of Dark Souls.

Perhaps you've seen it, maybe in a dream.

A murky, forgotten land.

A place where souls may mend your ailing mind.

You will lose everything, once branded.

The symbol of the Curse.

An augur of darkness.

Your past, your future, your very light.

None will have meaning and you won't even care.

By then you'll be something other than Human.

A thing that feeds on souls.

A Hollow.

